October 19, 2001

MEMORANDUM TO: Ashok C. Thadani, Director

Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research

FROM: Thomas L. King, Director /RA/

Division of Safety Analysis and Regulatory Effectiveness

Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH EXELON GENERATION COMPANY, DEPARTMENT

OF ENERGY, AND OTHER INTERESTED STAKEHOLDERS REGARDING THE PEBBLE BED MODULAR REACTOR

On August 15 and 16, 2001, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff held a day-and-a-half meeting with the representatives of Exelon, the Department of Energy (DOE), and other interested stakeholders to discuss the Pebble Bed Modular Reactor (PBMR) preapplication review efforts. This meeting was the fourth in a series of planned monthly topical meetings to be conducted between the NRC staff, Exelon, and DOE during the course of a year.

Attachment 1 contains the meeting agenda. Attachments 2-a and 2-b contain a list of attendees for each day. Exelon's nonproprietary presentation material is included in Attachments 3-a through 3-d. Exelon discussed proprietary information in closed sessions on both days. The presentation materials used in the closed sessions are not being released to the public.

In his opening remarks, Stuart Rubin (NRC) reiterated that the main objectives of the PBMR preapplication review process are to develop and feed back to Exelon NRC guidance concerning significant issues related to the siting, construction, and licensing of a PBMR in the United States. During the first day of the meeting, discussions on the PBMR licensing approach were continued from the June and July meetings. A new topic, computer codes for design and safety analysis, was introduced on the second day.

Fred Silady (Exelon consultant) led the discussion on methods for safety classification and development of regulatory design criteria for the PBMR in the United States. Attachment 3-a contains the presentation material. The following points were noted during the discussions:

- (a) The proposed licensing approach will use probabilistic risk assessment (PRA) to check the adequacy of the initially selected licensing basis events and to identify additional events that may need to be analyzed.
- (b) The PRA calculations will take credit for all available systems, structures, and components (SSCs), whereas analysis of the selected licensing basis events will take credit only for those SSCs that are designated as safety-related.

- (c) Sabotage will be addressed through administrative requirements and the analysis of sabotage-related events will be considered outside the scope of licensing basis events.
- (d) As in the staff's preapplication review of the Modular High-Temperature Gas-Cooled Reactor in the late 1980s, the staff may require the analysis of postulated events in addition to the mechanistic events selected by the applicant.
- (e) A given SSC may play a preventive role in one event sequence and a mitigative role in another.
- (f) Special treatment of SSCs will be based on risk information. The traditional single-failure criterion will not be used.
- (g) The SSCs relied on for beyond design basis events and emergency planning basis events are the same as those relied on for design basis events and anticipated operational occurrences.

Comments were solicited from the public after the presentations on the first day. Dr. Edwin Lyman (Nuclear Control Institute) commented that (a) the proposed licensing approach is apparently being provided to justify the design, (b) the primary coolant system pressure boundary must be classified as safety grade, (c) fuel quality and performance issues need close scrutiny and confirmation, and (d) information that the public needs to see is being inappropriately designated as proprietary and withheld from the public. Dr. Larry Parme (General Atomics) commented that the licensing approach proposed by Exelon is very logical and systematic and is strongly endorsed by General Atomics.

On the second day of the meetings, Johan Slabber (PBMR) provided an overview of the analytical codes used for design and safety analysis of the PBMR. Nonproprietary and proprietary versions of the overview were given in the morning and afternoon sessions, respectively. Attachments 3-b and 3-c contain the nonproprietary presentation materials. Attachment 3-b is the presentation material from a short discussion on PBMR fuel testing that was led by Robert Calabro (Exelon consultant).

The following points were noted in the discussions during these presentations:

- (a) Exelon will be expected to submit topical reports on the computational codes and specific input models used in the PBMR safety analyses.
- (b) The staff noted that nuclear cross section libraries derived from Version IV of Evaluated Nuclear Data File B (ENDF/B-IV) should be checked for errors in the $S(\alpha,\beta)$ bound thermal scattering data for graphite. Such errors are known to exist in all versions of ENDF/B prior to Release 3 of Version VI and have been shown to potentially distort the computed temperature coefficients of graphite and absorber materials in the core and reflectors.
- (c) The NRC's evaluation of fuel performance will consider parameters outside the design envelope criteria.

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(d) The maximum fuel temperature during normal operation was stated to be 1250°C, a significant increase over the 1060°C value indicated at the June meeting. This increase in the specified maximum fuel temperature during normal operation was said to be based in part on a preliminary critical review of the melt-wire test results from the German Arbeitsgemeinschaft-Versuchsreaktor, which were described by the NRC staff during the June meeting.

Public comments were again solicited after the nonproprietary presentations on the second day. Dr. Edwin Lyman (Nuclear Control Institute) noted that high-burnup fuel from light-water reactors has recently been tested and re-evaluated for the effects of rapid reactivity insertion accidents; he questioned whether PBMR fuel has been or will be tested for similar accident conditions. The staff's response noted that the NRC research program is considering the need for such pulsed tests and other tests that would explore the integrity and failure thresholds for PBMR fuel. Dr. Lyman also asked whether the peak fuel temperature had been analyzed for depressurized loss of forced circulation accidents with assumed loss of water from the reactor cavity cooling system (RCCS). Exelon responded that this event sequence has been analyzed and that the predicted peak fuel temperature is essentially the same as with the RCCS fully operational. Stephen Antonelli (Public Citizen's Critical Mass) expressed concern over (a) withholding proprietary information from public scrutiny, (b) reliance on German fuel designs and test data, and (c) adequate consideration of events with moisture ingress or rapid withdrawal of the in-reflector neutron absorber elements.

Exelon proposed meeting again on September 19 to continue discussions on the licensing approach and to discuss the status of legal and financial issues. The meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m. on August 16th. Any questions regarding this meeting should be addressed to Stuart Rubin (SDR1@nrc.gov), (301) 415-7480.

Attachments: As stated

cc w/o attachments: See attached list

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cc w/o attachments: See attached list

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cc w/o atts:

Ralph Beedle Senior Vice President and Chief Nuclear Officer Suite 400 1776 I Street, NW Washington, DC 20006-3708

James Muntz
Vice President Nuclear Projects
Exelon Generation
300 Exelon Way
Kenneth Square, PA 19348

Edward F. Sproat, III Vice President-International Projects Exelon Generation 300 Exelon Way Kenneth Square, PA 19348

Kevin Borton Exelon Generation 300 Exelon Way Kenneth Square, PA 19348

David Lochbaum Union of Concerned Scientists 1707 H Street, NW Washington, DC 20006-3919

Dr. Gail Marcus U.S. Department of Energy Office of Nuclear Energy, Science and Technology NE-1, Room 5A-143 1000 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, DC 20585 A. Thadani 5

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OF ENERGY, AND OTHER INTERESTED STAKEHOLDERS REGARDING THE PEBBLE BED MODULAR REACTOR

cc w/o atts (continued):

William D. Magwood, IV U.S. Department of Energy Office of Nuclear Energy, Science and Technology NE-1, Room 5A-143 1000 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, DC 20585

Mr. Paul Gunter Nuclear Information & Resource Service 1424 16th Street, NW, Suite 404 Washington, DC 20036

Mr. James Riccio Public Citizen's Critical Mass Energy Project 211 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE Washington, DC 20003

Mr. Ron Simard Nuclear Energy Institute Suite 400 1776 I Street, NW Washington, DC 20006-3708

<u>Agenda</u>

NRC Meeting with Exelon and DOE on PBMR August 15, 2001, 9:00 a.m. – 2:15 p.m August 16, 2001, 9:00 a.m. – 3:15 p.m ASLBP Hearing Room T3 B45

Day: Wednesday	Date: August 15	
9:00–9:15 a.m.	Introductory Remarks (S. Rubin)	NRC
9:15–9:30 a.m.	Introductory Remarks (K. Borton)	Exelon
9:30–1:45 p.m.	Licensing Approach: Selection of SSCs (Fred Siladay)	Exelon Consultant
9:30–10:45 a.m.	Background, Required Functions, Selection of Safety-Related Equipment (Fred Siladay)	
10:45–11:00 a.m.	Break	
11:00–11:45 a.m.	Development of Regulatory Design Criteria (Fred Siladay)	
11:45–12:00 a.m.	Stakeholder Comments	
12:00–1:00 p.m.	Lunch	
1:00–1:45 p.m.	Comparison of Approach with Current Regulatory Practice (Fred Siladay)	
1:45–2:00 p.m.	Stakeholder Comments	
2:00–2:15 p.m.	Closing Comments and Adjourn	

<u>Agenda</u>

NRC Meeting with Exelon and DOE on PBMR Aug 15, 2001, 9:00 a.m. – 2:15 p.m; Aug 16, 2001, 9:00 a.m. – 3:15 p.m. ASLBP Hearing Room T3 B45

Day: Thursday	Date: August 16			
9:00–9:15 a.m.	Introductory Remarks, S. Rubin			
9:15–10:00 a.m.	Introduction to Analytical Codes Used for PBMR Design and Analysis (Non-Proprietary), Johan Slabber	Exelon		
	Thermal-Hydraulic, Nuclear, Engineering Analysis, Reactor Analysis, Radiation Analysis, Fuel Performance, Risk and Consequence Analysis (I.e., non-PRA);			
10:00–10:30 a.m.	PBMR Pre-Application Fuel Design Approach (Non-Proprietary), R. Calabro	Exelon Consultant		
10:30–10:45 a.m.	Break			
10:45–11:30 a.m.	PBMR Core Design (NON-PROPRIETARY), J. Slabber	PBMR		
	Physical Layout, Core Pebble Flows, Use of Analytical Codes			
11:30–12:15 p.m.	PBMR Core Heat Removal (NON-PROPRIETARY), J. Slabber	PBMR		
	Normal Operation, Transients and Design Basis Events			
12:15–12:30 p.m.	Stakeholder Comments			
12:30–1:30 p.m.	Lunch			
1:30–2:30 p.m.	PBMR Core Design Analysis Results (PROPRIETARY), J. Slabber	PBMR		
2:30–3:30 p.m.	PBMR Heat Removal Analysis Results (PROPRIETARY), J. Slabber	PBMR		
3:30–3:15 p.m.	Closing Comments, Administrative Items and Adjourn	NRC/ Exelon		

NAME	ORGANIZATION	TELEPHONE	E-MAIL ADDRESS
Stuart Rubin	NRC/RES	301-415-7480	sdr1@nrc.gov
Amy Cubbage	NRC/NRR	301-415-2875	aec@nrc.gov
Eric Benner	NRC/NRR	301-415-1171	ejb1@nrc.gov
Jim Lyons	NRC/NRR	301-415-1126	jel@nrc.gov
Donald E. Carlson	NRC/RES	301-415-8507	dec1@nrc.gov
Tom King	NRC/RES	301-415-7499	tlk@nrc.gov
N.P. Kadambi	NRC/RES	301-415-5896	npk@nrc.gov
Ed Wallace	Exelon	610-765-5721	edward.wallace1@exeloncorp.com
Kevin Borton	Exelon	610-765-5228	kevin.borton@exeloncorp.com
Fred A. Silady	Technology Insights	858-455-9500	silady@ti-sd.com
Jim Muntz	Exelon	610-765-5660	james.muntz@exeloncorp.com
R M Krich	Exelon Nuclear	630-657-2813	rod.krich@exeloncorp.com
John Flack	NRC/RES	301-415-5739	jhf@nrc.gov
Marsha Gamberoni	NRC/NRR	301-415-1193	mkg@nrc.gov
Subinoy Mazumdar	NRC/NRR	301-415-2904	sxm3@nrc.gov
David Terao	NRC/NRR	301-415-3317	dxt@nrc.gov

NAME	ORGANIZATION	TELEPHONE	E-MAIL ADDRESS
Dirk Olivier	ESKOM, South Africa	+27 (11) 800-5162	dirk.olivier@eskom.co.za
Thomas Cheng	NRC/NRR	301-415-2770	tmc@nrc.gov
Edwin Lyman	Nuc. Control Inst.	202-822-6594	lyman@nci.org
Roger Huston	LSS	703-671-9738	Roger@licensingsupport.com
Steven Arndt	NRC/RES	301-415-6502	saa@nrc.gov
Alan Rubin	NRC/RES	301-415-6776	amr@nrc.gov
Joe Muscara	NRC/RES	301-415-5844	jxm8@nrc.gov
David Fischer	NRC/NRR/EMEB	301-415-2728	dcf@nrc.gov
Norman St. Amour	NRC/OGC	301-415-1589	nxs1@nrc.gov
Martin J. O'Neill	NRC/OGC	301-415-8554	mjo@nrc.gov
Ray Reith	INEEL/DOE	301-903-2663	RAYMOND.REITH@HQ.DOE.GOV
Charles Ader	NRC/RES	301-415-0135	cea@nrc.gov
E. McKenna	NRC/NRR		
Karl Fleming	Technology Insights	760-419-9212	karlfleming@
Craig D. Seller	ITS	410-394-1504	CDS@ITSC.com

Larry Parme	General Atomics	505-661-4413	Laurence.Parme@GAT.COM
Dennis J. Kampe	UCAR Carbon	216-676-2418	dennis.kampe@UCAR.com
Horace R. Hall	ULCAR Carbon	304-624-1296	horace.hall@UCAR.com
Robert Calabro	Consultant/Exelon	561-417-3382	rrcalabro1@MSN.com
Vijay M. Nilekani	Exelon Generation	610-765-5714	Vijay.Nilekani@exeloncorp.com
Johan FM Slabber	Exelon PBMR Generation	610-765-5714	johan.slabber@PBMR.co.za
Peter Pagano	Exelon	610-765-5820	Peter.Pagano@exeloncorp.com
John Hufnagel	Exelon	610-765-5507	john.hufnagel@exeloncorp.com
Steve Frantz	Morgan Lewis	202-467-7460	sfrantz@morganlewis.com
Stephen Antonelli	Public Citzien's Critical Mass	202-454-5174	santonelli@citizen.org
P.T. Kuo	NRC/NRR	301-415-3147	PTK@nrc.gov
Sean Peters	NRC/NRR	301-415-1842	sep@nrc.gov
Mark Kowal	NRC/NRR	301-415-1663	mxk7@nrc.gov
Raji Tripathi	NRC/RES	301-415-7472	rrt1@nrc.gov
Narinkar Treman	NRC/NRR	301-415-2777	nkt@nrc.gov
Undine Shoop	NRC/NRR	301-415-2063	uss@nrc.gov
Yuri Orechwa	NRC/NRR	301-415-1057	yxo@nrc.gov

Serhat Kose	NRC/NRR	301-415-2866	nrcoip1@earthlink.net
Tom Dunn	Duke Eng.	202-205-5993	thomasdunn@YMD.gov
Tony Ulses	NRC/RES	301-415-6002	apu@nrc.gov
Chester Gingrich	NRC/RES	301-415-6780	cgg@nrc.gov
Mark R. Holbrook	INEEL	208-526-4362	hbk@inel.gov
Matt Bivens	Nation Magazine	240-899-1510	mattbivens@yahoo.com
Goutam Bagchi	NRR/DE	301-415-3298	gxb1@nrc.gov

NAME	ORGANIZATION	TELEPHONE	E-MAIL ADDRESS
Stuart Rubin	NRC/RES	301-415-7480	SDR@nrc.gov
Amy Cubbage	NRC/NRR	301-415-2875	AEC@nrc.gov
Ralph Meyer	NRC/RES		
Craig Sellers	ITS Corp	410-394-1504	CDS@ITSC.com
Larry Parme	General Atomics	505-661-4413	Laurence.Parme@GAT.com
Dennis Kampe	UCAR Carbon	216-676-2418	dennis.kampe@UCAR.com
Horace Hall	UCAR Carbon	304-624-1296	horace.hall@UCAR.com
Roger Huston	LSS	703-671-9738	Roger@licensingsupport.com
Fred A. Silady	Technology Insights	858-455-9500	silady@ti-sd.com
Steve Frantz	Morgan, Lewis	202-467-7460	sfrantz@morganlewis.com
John Hufnagel	Exelon	610-765-5507	johnhufnagel@exeloncorp.com
Jim Muntz	Exelon	610-765-5660	james.muntz@exeloncorp.com
Madeline A. Feltus	US DOE	301-903-2308	madeline.feltus@hq.doe.gov
Peter Pagano	Exelon	610-765-5820	peter.pagano@exeloncorp.com
Stan Ritterbusch	Westinghouse	860-731-6621	stanley.e.ritterbusch@us.westinghouse.com

Undine Shoop	NRC/NRR	301-415-2063	uss@nrc.gov
Yuri Orechwa	NRC/NRR	301-415-1057	yxo@nrc.gov
Charles Ader	NRC/RES	301-415-0135	cea@nrc.gov
Steven Arndt	NRC/RES	301-415-6502	saa@nrc.gov
Frank Orr	NRC/NRR	301-415-1815	fro@nrc.gov
Serhat Kose	NRC/NRR	301-415-2866	nrcoip1@earthlink.net
Robert Taylor	NRC/NRR	301-415-1869	rxt2@nrc.gov
Sean Peters	NRC/NRR	301-415-1842	sep@nrc.gov
Mark Kowal	NRC/NRR	301-415-1663	mxk7@nrc.gov
Goutam Bagchi	NRR/DE	301-415-3298	gxb1@nrc.gov
Narinder Trehan	NRR/DE	301-415-2777	nkt@nrc.gov
Stephen Antonelli	Public Citizen's Critical Mass	202-454-5174	santonelli@citizen.org
Raji Tripathi	NRC/RES	301-415-7472	rrt1@nrc.gov
S.B. Sun	NRC/NRR	301-415-2868	SBS@nrc.gov
Thomas Cheng	NRC/NRR	301-415-2770	tmc@nrc.gov
Chester Gingrich	NRC/RES	301-415-6780	cgg@nrc.gov
Mark R. Holbrook	INEEL	208-526-4362	hbk@inel.gov

M. Chiramal	NRR/NRC	301-415-2845	mxc@nrc.gov
Norma Garcia Santos	NRC/NMSS	301-415-6680	ngs@nrc.gov
Alex Murray	NRC/NMSS	301-415-7854	axm2@nrc.gov
Joe Muscara	NRC/RES	301-415-5844	jxm8@nrc.gov
Tom King	NRC/RES	301-415-7499	tlk@nrc.gov
Donald E. Carlson	NRC/RES	301-415-8507	dec1@nrc.gov
John H. Flack	NRC/RES	301-415-5739	jhf@nrc.gov
N.P. Kadambi	NRC/RES	301-415-5896	npk@nrc.gov
K. F. Borton	Exelon	610-765-5528	kevin.borton@exeloncorp.com
Ed Wallace	Exelon	610-765-5721	edward.wallace1@exeloncorp.com
Vijay M. Nilekani	Exelon	610-765-5714	vijay.nilekani@exeloncorp.com
Dirk Olivier	ESKOM, South Africa	+27 (11) 800-5162	dirk.olivier@eskom.co.za
Johan Slabber	PBMR	+27 (12) 807-2967	johan.slabber@pbmr.co.za
R. M. Krich	Exelon Nuclear	630-657-2813	rod.krich@exeloncorp.com